

Bibliotherapy as a Problem-Solving Skill of Counsellors and Teachers for Character and Skills Development in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Emotional disturbance is a psychological situation in which one's feelings are heightened, causing anxiety to set in. This disturbance can lead to low academic achievements in affected students. It takes away children's attention from realities and this affect their academic, character and skills development that are of benefit to the individual emotionally disturbed student and his community. Bibliotherapy is one of the solutions to emotional disturbance and as a problem-solving skill of counsellors, bibliotherapy will be understood if applied to students at the secondary school level, a time they can read and assimilate content of therapeutic material in a book. Causes of emotional problem in children are many and come in different ways, ranging from death of loved ones to reasons that make children become disturbed. A survey research designed was used to obtained respondents' opinion on perceived effect of problem-solving skills of counsellors on emotionally disturbed students in public secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. A sample of 267 respondents, gave a grand mean of 4.50 and a standard variation of 0.607 established the effectiveness of bibliotherapy problem-solving skills of counsellors. The study concluded that bibliotherapy is a problem-solving skill of counsellors on emotional problems.

Introduction

Emotional disturbance is a Psychological situation in which one's feelings are heightened to a point that if no solution is found, it can lead to:- (i) low or no academic achievements (ii) no personal development of any sort (iii) depression and (iv) mental illness. The term bibliotherapy has divers definitions but each depends on the context it is used, because definition can be general and all inclusive, it can be specific, simple and or complex. Herbert and Furner (1997) defined bibliotherapy as the use of reading to produce affective change and promote personality growth and development. The Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science (ODLIS, 2011) defined bibliotherapy as the use of books selected on the basis of content in a planned reading programme designed to facilitate the recovery of patients suffering from mental illness or emotional disturbance. Riordan and Wilson (1989) defined the term bibliotherapy as the guided reading of written materials in gaining understanding or solving problems relevant to the person's therapeutic needs, and Lucas and Soares (2015) defined bibliotherapy as a tool to promote children's psychological wellbeing.

History of Bibliotherapy

The history of bibliotherapy teaches that the use of books as emotional problem-solving skill and tool has been around and used for centuries, but operating in different names depending on the time and place. Names bibliotherapy was known with included: bibliocounselling, bibliopsychology, book matching, literatherapy, library therapeutics, guided reading and biblioguidance (Basbane, 2001).

King Ramses II of ancient Egypt had a motor at the entrance of his Royal Chamber where books were stored that read, "House of Healing for the Soul," meaning that books were sources of healing of the mind (Basbane, 2001). Galen, the extraordinary philosopher and physician to Marcus Aurelius of Rome, maintained a medical library in the first century, A.D. He and staff of the Sanctuary Asclepiion, one of the first hospital centres in the world used the library for reading as part of treatment for patients with ailments that were linked to emotional disturbances (Basbane, 2001). As far back as 1272 in the Al-Mansur Hospital in Cairo Egypt, the Koran was read to patients as a bibliotherapy material and part of medical treatment (Rubin, 1978).

History records that it was Samuel Crothers who first coined the term, bibliotherapy in August, 1916 (Basbane, 2001). By the 1920s, there were training programmes in bibliotherapy in institutions like the School of Library Science at Western Reserve University, School of Medicines, University of Minnesota and many others in the United States of America (USA). This also perhaps led to the interest in bibliotherapy as "curative medicine" in the United Kingdom (UK) in the 1930s. The concept of the treatment using bibliotherapy is based on the human inclinations to identify with others through their expressions in literature and art (Basbane, 2001).

Signs of Emotional Disturbance in Secondary School Children

A number of students in many secondary schools in Ogun State and in other states in Nigeria are likely passing through problems of different types and magnitudes. These problems are likely the product of the environment

they live in that are associated with truancy in school attendance and activities, disobedience to parents, teachers and all constituted authorities, taking to crime, drug abuse, armed robbery, kidnapping, rebellion, destruction of private and public property, stealing, hostility, gang up e.g. *area boys* in Lagos, and touts in motor parks in many big cities in Nigeria and so forth.

The emotionally disturbed are boys and girls likely facing numerous life challenges that are expressed in low academic achievements, self-withdrawals, unhappiness, anger, inability to meet needs, lack of knowledge, results of partial or total failure, inability to realize aspirations, anxiety and hyperactivity, among other challenges that end up in emotional disturbance in children and individuals.

Causes of Emotional Disturbance in Secondary School Students

Bibliotherapy problems are emotional or developmental in nature. The aim and goal of bibliotherapy therefore, is to :

(i) solve emotional problems that may affect the developmental growth of children not only those in schools but all children that read well, assimilate and make sense of what is read, (ii) make use of books to assist individuals in coping with emotional problems and changes in behaviour, and (iii) to encourage personal growth (Abdullah, 2002).

The causes of emotional disturbance in secondary school students and adolescents in Nigeria can be many and different. School counsellors and teachers at this educational level need to know the causes of their students' emotional problems so as to have proper understanding of each problem and what counselling skill, technique or strategies to use in finding solution to them. Some of the causes of emotional disturbance in secondary school students in Nigeria and elsewhere could be the death of a biological parent and or loved one, divorce by parents, separation from parents especially children of military officers whose either of the parent is sent to fight in a war, e.g, the Boko Haram war in the north eastern Nigeria, the war in Mali, the war in South Sudan and Somalia and so forth, all in Africa; children whose parents are diagnosed as victims of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) or Ebola victim; leprosy parents; poverty ridden children; children of single parents; children who discover that they are bastards, and many other offensive and unprintable tags attached on persons, names and backgrounds, also, children leaving the comfort of their homes for the first time and living in halls of residence in schools, are among the reasons for emotional disturbance in children. The thinking of a Nigerian child of not having a proud background makes such a child think deeply every moment and this may become a problem that soon or later affects his/her psyche and before too long, the child becomes traumatized and is emotionally disturbed.

The economic down turn in a state or the country can lead to parents losing their jobs and means of sustaining their families. The inability of parents addressing the needs of their children such as payment of school fees, buying school books and uniform are some of the reasons to make children become emotionally disturbed. Children whose either of the parents is serving a jail sentence can become emotionally disturbed.

Effects of Emotional Disturbance on Secondary School Children

Emotional state of one's mind and disturbance of the mind put together may be said as that heightened state of the mind that is full of anxiety that causes a child or individual not to concentrate in their school work and other activities. Any person in this state of the mind may likely experience little or no focus in life's real things and situations because his/her reality is about to be lost or is lost; and it is a problem that requires reasons for the problem and solution to the problem.

School counsellors should know that the use of bibliotherapy as a problem-solving skill will be better understood if it is given to children and adolescents or students at the secondary educational level in Nigeria, because it is assumed that students at this level can read well and assimilate. Reading good books by students and adolescents may be a guide to keep them away from problems that could be emotional in nature. This paper is meant to help school counsellors in Nigeria to use bibliotherapy as one of the skills for counselling their students that display signs of emotional disturbance.

Bibliotherapy as a problem-solving skill of counsellors has many uses on secondary school students and adolescents who are facing one or many problems that affect their emotional well-being; school counsellors should therefore be aware and know this. According to Sridhar & Vaughn (2000), Akinola (2014) and Patsalides (2012), some of the uses of bibliotherapy are to: improve reading comprehension, enhanced self-esteem, improve behaviour for students with learning and behaviour problems, match appropriate books with the students and their various problems, enable emotionally disturbed students and adolescents see similarities between their various problems, help school counsellors and teachers address social problems affecting their students, help school counsellors and teachers build community, and serve as a correctional and general well-being for people undergoing emotional and behavioural disorders. It is very important that every school counsellor and teacher is aware and know of bibliotherapy and what role it plays in human development and especially in Nigeria.

The effective use of bibliotherapy as a problem-solving skill of counsellors and teachers in Nigeria on

the emotionally disturbed students and adolescents would perhaps, results in maintaining, caring and curing them from their emotional problems. The effective use of relevant books by the emotionally disturbed students may bring behaviour modifications and turn-around-positive changes in individual behaviour. At the secondary school age that is between 12 to 16 years on the average in Nigeria, children begin to dream of their future careers and vocations. The school counsellors must do well to expose these students to many careers and what it takes to prepare for a chosen career, stay in a chosen career or vocation and develop and progress in that career. The secondary school age is that period when children, if not properly guided, can derail from realities to destructive actions due to emotional problems around and affecting them. Teachers and school counsellors must be on the watch for signs of emotional disturbance in their students. Teachers who teach the students are in position to be those who should first detect emotional problem in a given student. It will be the duty of the teacher to refer the student with emotional problem to the school counsellor for possible solution to his/her emotional problem.

Children bedeviled with emotional problems can contribute to the development of their communities and nation only when their emotional problems are solved. It is when emotional problems of affected children are solved that effort are geared toward their character and skills development, because only a normal person can think of building a good character and having a skill for developing himself, community and nation. Nigeria requires citizens with good character and needed skills for developing the country.

Characteristics Expected of a Bibliotherapist

Characteristics of a bibliotherapist are the same as of a counsellor and are also referred to as counselling skills. Some of these skills a counsellor and or bibliotherapist must have are:

Competence: ability to master and know how to use a skill or skills effectively.

Patience: Counsellor's capacity to wait and endure for a long period. Counsellor's ability to control anger and emotion over a happening that may be problematic.

Trust: reliance, confidence, truth or honour.

Emotional stability: A condition where emotions do not change and do remain steady.

Effective communication: Correct exchange information especially between two person and groups.

Advocacy: A kind of support from a counsellor or bibliotherapist to his mentally disturbed student.

Willing listener: Pay attention while someone is speaking to you to enable you understands what the speaker is saying. Listen well and patiently too.

Free from bias: Not being judgmental or taking sides.

Possession of these skills and many others and the ability to apply them in the treatment of emotionally disturbed students is very helpful.

Bibliotherapy as a Solution to Emotional Disturbance in Children: Survey Result

Bibliotherapy is a tool and a problem-solving skill of counsellors in solving problems such as emotional disturbance in affected persons. The problem-solving skills are meant to help students who are emotionally disturbed, discuss their problems more freely with their teachers and counsellors, show an individual that he/she is not the first or only person to encounter such a problem. Problem-solving skills of counsellors are to show the individual so affected that there is more than one solution to a problem, help someone develop self-concept, individual to plan constructive cause of action to solve a problem, the emotionally disturbed individual to experience relieve of emotional or mental pressure (catharsis) and help in restoring the individual to his or her normal state of health and life.

An emotionally disturbed individual student if identified, is given a book with content that is similar to the problem that individual student is confronted with. A trained bibliotherapist or counsellor recommends reading material or book to the affected student to read. The book content is a story of another child in similar situation as that of the reader, makes the student/reader aware that he/she is not the first or only person facing such a problem and that other children have suffered similar experiences and (how) they overcame the problem. The story in the book may be real life experience or fiction. Whatever is the source of the book content, the primary aim is to provide relief to someone agonizing and not having a focus and direction in life.

Table 1 below shows survey results of problem-solving skills of counsellors in selected public secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Methodology: A sample of 267 school counsellors from five secondary schools in Ogun East Senatorial District were selected through simple random sampling method and 267 copy of a questionnaire were given to them to fill. All the 267 were collected. 247 were properly filled and therefore analyzed. 20 were rejected because they were not properly filled. The Table shows the analysis of the responses obtained.

Table 4.7: Problem-solving skills of Counsellors

| S/N | Items/Statements | SA | A | PA | D | SD | Mean | S. D |
|-----|--|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------|------|---------|
| 1 | Problem-Solving skills are ways of solving problems confronting students. | 118 (47.8) | 97 (39.3) | 32 (12.9) | - - | - - | 4.35 | 0.682 |
| 2 | Skills help in identifying emotional problems in people. | 72 (29.1) | 149 (60.3) | 26 (10.6) | - - | - - | 4.19 | 0.573 |
| 3 | School Counsellors must be competent in using problem-solving skills to solve problems of their emotional disturbed students | 86 (34.8) | 144 (58.3) | 17 (6.9) | - - | - - | 4.31 | 0.540 |
| 4 | In problem-solving, patience is a skill needed by school counsellors. | 70 (28.3) | 154 (62.3) | 23 (9.4) | - - | - - | 4.19 | 0.547 |
| 5 | Trust relationship must exist between counsellor and client in problem-solving scheme | 107 (40.3) | 97 (30.3) | 26 (10.5) | 17 (18.9) | - - | 4.30 | 0.781 |
| 6 | Emotional stability is required by counsellors to solve client's emotional and other problems. | 99 (40.0) | 100 (40.4) | 23 (9.3) | 25 (10.3) | - - | 4.19 | 0.883 |
| 7 | Effective communication is needed by counsellors in problem-solving. | 93 (37.7) | 138 (55.9) | 26 (6.4) | - - | - - | 4.35 | 0.543 |
| 8 | Advocacy is a problem-solving skill for any school counsellor. | 94 (38) | 113 (45.7) | 24 (9.7) | 16 (6.6) | - - | 4.25 | 0.73206 |
| 9 | A school counsellor must be a willing listener in emotional problem-solving. | 132 (53.4) | 98 (39.7) | 17 (6.9) | - - | - - | 4.50 | 0.571 |
| 10 | For school counsellors to solve emotional problems, they must be free from being bias | 131 (53.0) | 99 (40.0) | 17 (7.0) | - - | - - | 4.50 | 0.571 |
| 11 | Effectiveness is an important problem -solving skill in the practice of bibliotherapy. | 79 (31.9) | 168 (68.1) | - - | - - | - - | 4.31 | 0.465 |
| 12 | Problem-solving skills can treat and cure emotionally disturbed children to become future nation builders | 57 (23.1) | 174 (70.4) | 16 (6.5) | - - | - - | 4.16 | 0.451 |
| 13 | Problem solving skill is an enhancement to the work of counsellor , Teacher and Librarian | 41 (16.6) | 168 (68) | 38 (15.4) | - - | - - | 4.01 | 0.562 |
| | | | | | Grand Mean | | 4.27 | 0.607 |

Keys: Strongly Agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) = 4, Partially Agree (PA)= 3, Disagree (D)= 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)= 1

Results

The Table shows the performance of each question. Problem-solving skill as a whole has a Grand Mean value of 4.27 and Standard Deviation (SD) of 0.607 on a 5-point Likert scale, Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Partially Agree (PA), Disagree (DA) and Strongly Dis Agree (SD). The 5-point scale had these values attached to it: SA = 5, A = 4, PA = 3, D = 2, and SD = 1

Table 1 is summarized thus: Tested problem-solving skills of counsellors showed that “willing listener” has a mean of 4.50, and “free from being bias”, with mean 4.50, ranked highest among other skills. “Effective communication” gave a mean of 4.35, “competence”, 4.31, and “Trust”, 4.30.

The entire results are indication that the problem-solving skills of counsellors are suitable for solving emotional problems in secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the findings, some of the following conclusions are made:

1. Skills help in identifying individual victims of emotional problems among secondary school students.
2. Problem-solving skills of counsellors include competence, patience, trust, emotional stability, effective communication, willing listener, not bias, effectiveness, etc.

3. Detailed analysis of each and all the 13 questions indicated that bibliotherapy is a problem-solving skill of counsellors and teachers. Emotional problems of the Nigerian child must be solved before learning can take place in him/her. Ability to learn will lead to character and skills development in children that are emotionally disturbed.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Awareness of bibliotherapy should be a continuous and regular item on the Class Time Tables of secondary schools in Nigeria. This should be in the form of group counselling so as to achieve the awareness goal of reaching all the students in each school.
2. Students found to have emotional problems, should be helped through counsellors' detecting the type of emotional problem and administering the right therapy.
3. Nigeria must concern itself with freeing its young people from diverse emotional problems so that they will grow as healthy boys and girls, and develop to citizens who will manage general development of their societies, state and the country.
4. Perceived effect of bibliotherapy problem-solving skills have been found to be effective in this study in Ogun State, Nigeria. Similar studies should be carried out in other parts of Nigeria by counsellors and teachers so that the emotionally disturbed children could be detected very early and given treatment.
5. Character and skills cannot be developed in secondary school children who are emotionally disturbed. It is therefore imperative to first solve emotional problems in affected children before introducing them to issues of character and skills development.

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